Dear Piney Branch Friends and Families;

Piney Branch Elementary School is a preK-5th grade school in the Prince William Public School System. We strive to foster an environment that creates kind, caring, courageous Cardinals who SOAR every day. We believe this core tenant will build relationships central to a safe and welcoming school which ensures student learning and achievement to the fullest potential.

This year we will focus on collaboratively providing the opportunities for kind, caring, courageous Cardinals to SOAR!

Please join your child and our school community this year by attending some of our many school events, volunteering within the school, and joining our wonderful PTO.

On behalf of the entire Piney Branch Elementary School staff, we would like to welcome you and your children to Piney Branch ES for the 2019-20 school year. We are excited for this new school year as we continue to grow and learn together.

Damon Cerrone and Steven Thorne

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PTO and PBAC:
PTO has two parent organizations, the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and the Piney Branch Advisory Council (PBAC).

The PTO is a unified non-profit organization whose primary purpose is to promote the welfare of children through educational means. PTO meetings take place monthly. Watch for the PTO Newsletter for dates and times. Activities organized by PTO may include:

- Movie Nights
- Talent Show
- The Color Run
- After School Enrichment
- Bingo Events
- Family Events

Please see the PTO link on our website for more information, explanations, and details on these fun activities.

Piney Branch Advisory Council (PBAC) generates community input for the annual strategic school plan. Representatives, consisting of parents as well as teachers, meet monthly. All meetings are open to the public and parents are encouraged to attend.

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PBES Hours of Operation
Office hours: 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM
Arrival Bell: 9:10 AM, Tardy Bell: 9:20 AM, Dismissal Bell: 4:00 PM
ATTENDANCE

Attendance and punctuality are top priorities for all students. Research indicates a high correlation in the relationship between students’ academic success and their attendance at school. The nature of the curriculum necessitates active classroom participation. In addition, the Prince William County School Board has identified improved student attendance as a part of the Strategic Improvement Plan.

ARRIVAL: Doors will open at 9:10 a.m., after the first bell. At this time, students are permitted to go to either their classroom or the cafeteria for breakfast. To keep our students safe, they may not arrive to school prior to 9:10 a.m.

All students should be seated in their classrooms by the second bell at 9:20 a.m. Students arriving after 9:20 a.m. are required to be signed in by a parent in the main office. They will receive a tardy pass to take to class.

ABSENCES AND TARDIES: If your child is going to be absent or late, contact the school office as soon as possible. The attendance line is available 24 hours a day for your message. Please include your child’s name, teacher, and reason for your child’s absence. If the parent/guardian does not provide documentation, the absence will be considered unexcused.

- Excused Absence and Tardy—Illness of the student, death in the family, doctor or dentist appointment, extreme inclement weather, or observance of a religious holiday.
- Unexcused Absence and Tardy—Family trip, childcare situation, oversleeping, non-school-related activity, traffic, or missed bus.

DISMISSAL: Kiss & Ride students will be dismissed from their classrooms at 3:55 p.m. Bus riders will be dismissed beginning at 4:00 p.m. or as soon as their buses arrive. We will do our best to make notifications if buses leave late from the school.

Early Dismissal

If it is necessary that you pick up your child prior to the end of the school day advance notice is appreciated. Please send an e-mail or note in with your child to inform the teacher. For safety purposes, no child will be dismissed from the classroom without being signed out first in the front office. Students will not be sent to the office until you arrive and present your photo identification.

Early dismissal takes approximately 15 minutes from parent arrival. Please plan your timing accordingly.

Students will only be released to those individuals listed on the emergency card. If a student returns to school the same day, the student needs to be signed in again through the main office.

KISS AND RIDE (KNR) OR PARENT PICK-UP

KISS AND RIDE tags will be issue upon request in the main office. For morning drop off, KNR students must be dropped off in the KNR lane only. Staff will be present to insure safety, please follow their directions. Once directed by staff, students should exit only the right side of the vehicle. For afternoon pick up, please pull as far forward as you can in the KNR lane and stay in your vehicle. Staff will escort children to the KNR line in groups. Please use caution as you pull forward in line.

Here Comes the Bus App

If you are unable to drop your child off at the KNR lane, please use the Here Comes the Bus App. You can download the App from the Google Play or Apple store.

VISITORS AND SECURITY

PBES is equipped with a secure doorbell system. All visitors will be asked for their manner of business and ID prior to gaining access. All parents and visitors must present a photo ID when signing in at the front office to obtain a badge. This badge must be worn at all times on school property and gives you access to only the parts of the building stated on the badge. Photo IDs are held in the front office during your visit and are returned to you when checking out. (Regulation 501.06-1)

Change in Home-Travel Routine

Child going home a different way (i.e. Kiss & Ride vs bus):
Please, Please, Please do everything you can to remember to send in a note with your child in the morning indicating the change. If this is not possible, a parent/guardian must notify the school prior to 2:00 p.m. on that day. Please e-mail the change to PBES-office@pwcs.edu. After 2:00 you MUST notify the office by phone. Children will need to go home their normal way with out notice from a parent or guardian.

We will always err on the side of caution and send children to SACC, daycare, or hold children here at school if there is question about their dismissal by bus. This will ensure the safety of students.

- Child going home with another student: Your child must bring in a note, signed by a parent or guardian, indicating the date and the name of the child they will be traveling home with. A Bus Pass will be issued by the front office.
- Child being picked up by a friend or relative: We must have a signed note from the parent indicating the full name of the friend or relative. This friend or relative must be listed on your child’s Emergency Card as a person authorized to pick up your child. The person picking up your child MUST present a photo ID.

BUS RIDERS

PWCS provides bus transportation for all students who reside within the Piney Branch boundary. Visit Transportation Services at www.pwcs.edu for more information about bus stops and schedules. Also check out the Here Comes the Bus App.

Please have your child arrive at the bus stop five to ten minutes before the scheduled pickup time. Bus riders should refrain from crossing or playing on private property, please obey the bus drivers instructions, remain seated on the bus, and talk quietly while on the bus.

Kindergarten students will only be released to a parent/guardian (or other person listed on the kindergarten transportation form) with a photo ID. Kindergarteners will be returned to school if an authorized person with ID is not present to receive them at the bus stop.
**HEALTH INFORMATION**

**When to Keep your Child Home**

Students with the following symptoms should stay home until a doctor evaluates their symptoms and determines whether or not they are contagious:

- Rash
- Watery and inflamed eyes
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore throat

Prince William County Schools require children to remain at home, fever-free without medication for 24 hours after an illness, prior to returning to school. Remember to call the Attendance Line at (571) 261-5309 to report your child’s absence. Please state your child’s symptoms such as fever, cough, sore throat, nausea, or vomiting. **Please inform school staff if your child has received a diagnosis from a doctor, especially if it is an illness that is considered contagious.**

**TAKING YOUR CHILD HOME**

We will call you to pick up your child if he/she exhibits symptoms of illness such as: fever of 100 degrees or higher, persistent abdominal pain, vomiting, unexplained rash, diarrhea, inflamed eyes with discharge, or persistent cough. We ask that your child be picked up as soon as possible. It is important to have all emergency numbers up to date in case we cannot reach you.

**MEDICATION AT SCHOOL**

Prescription and over-the-counter medications require strict adult supervision. Forms to authorize school staff to administer medication are available in the office and online at www.pwcs.edu and search Health Forms.

Chapstick and cough drops are the only items permitted to be self-carried by students. Should your child carry these items to school we ask that you make your classroom teacher aware.

A parent or guardian must bring medication to and from school. **Students are not permitted to carry medications to and from school.** In order for students to receive medication at school, the proper paperwork must be submitted for each medication. Your child must have the first dose of any new medication at home. A parent or guardian must personally collect any unused portion of the medication. Medications not claimed at the end of the school year will be destroyed.

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**LUNCH INFORMATION**

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**LUNCH A LA CARTE ITEMS**

These are available to supplement student lunches. Students must have a school lunch or home lunch in order to purchase an a la carte item.

Only one breakfast and one lunch per student per day qualify at the subsidized price. The cost of any additional lunch is at the adult price or a la carte price, whichever is less.

**HOW TO PAY FOR LUNCH**

Online—[www.myschoolbucks.com](http://www.myschoolbucks.com). The service has a $1.95 fee per transaction. The balance can be checked by computer or phone. Mobile apps are available.

Check—Send a check made payable to **PWCFS** to the cafeteria manager in the morning. Include your child’s name, student ID, and teacher’s name on the memo line of the check.

Cash—Parents may deposit cash in their child’s account or students may pay by cash daily.

**FREE OR REDUCED MEALS**

Please visit PWCS School Food and Nutrition Services at [www.pwcsnutrition.com](http://www.pwcsnutrition.com) to apply. Parents must complete the form **EACH YEAR** in August to renew this program. For questions regarding this program and how to apply please contact the cafeteria manager.

**JOIN YOUR CHILD FOR LUNCH!**

We welcome parents to eat lunch with their child in the cafeteria. Please contact your child’s teacher to see if they are ready for lunch visitors. An adjustment period may be necessary for students to get used to their new routine before having visitors for lunch. You may purchase a lunch from the cafeteria or bring outside food for you and your child only. Please come a few minutes early to check in through the front office and get a pass to meet your child’s class in the cafeteria.

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**Birthdays and Treat Policy**

At Piney Branch we recognize the importance of birthday celebrations while respecting the importance of healthy nutrition, and being mindful of students with life-threatening food allergies. Each student may bring a treat to share with all classmates in celebration of his/her birthday. Please communicate with classroom teachers in advance regarding allergy considerations, class number, and potential birthday overlap. Please use the following guidelines when providing birthday treats for classmates:

- Treats **MUST** be store bought with ingredients labeled.
- No home baked goods will be permitted to be shared with other students.
- Treats meeting allergy free criteria (Birthday Icy cups or cookies) may be purchased though the cafeteria manager
- Treats should be single small sized servings.
- All treats will be shared at lunch time in the cafeteria

Birthday Invitations can be sent in to be distributed in class however they must be inclusive of the entire class.
Communications:

Piney Branch communicates with parents through a number of methods. Here's how we can help you find the information you're looking for:

The NEST: A weekly newsletter e-mailed home every Wednesday to keep all families updated on all that is happening at PBES.

PBES Website: The most up to date emergency messages, updates, calendars, and urgent announcements as well as classroom information will appear on pineybranches.pwcs.edu make this your #1 source of PBES information.

Wednesday Communicator: All fliers, order forms, permission slips, brochures, and news from community organizations will go home weekly via this folder. Folders should be signed and returned to school upon receipt.

Facebook/Twitter: Follow us on social media, @PBEScardinals, for additional pictures, announcements, and non-vital information from PBES.

School Messenger: PWCS employs the School Messenger system to contact the community via text, e-mail, and telephone. Many announcements will be made, in duplicate, on this system to ensure you have the most accurate information. Please make sure your contact information is up to date. Download the My PWCS App and School Messenger app from the Google Play or Apple App stores.

Sending a note to school...
When sending a note in with your child please include your child's full name, their teachers name and the date. This will help avoid any confusion between students with similar names and date/day of the week mishaps.

Behavior & Discipline:

Piney Branch is a Positive Behavior Intervention and Support School. Please read the school-wide PBIS brochure for all the details of our program. While PBES devotes effort and resources towards our PBIS program where we ask students to be kind, caring, courageous cardinals who soar, we acknowledge there may still be difficult times where discipline is necessary.

In those times, expect written contact from the classroom teacher on a "Classroom Behavior Communication Form." We will detail the adult’s interpretation of the event as well as the student’s perspective and explanation. You will be notified via email or telephone to expect these forms.

Issues requiring administrative intervention will receive an “Office Referral Form” and you will receive a direct phone call from the classroom teacher, a counselor, and/or a school administrator.

Academics:

PBES uses the VA Standards of Learning in conjunction with curriculum designed by Prince William County Public Schools. We strive to deliver rigorous, active and engaging learning, differentiated to the unique needs of your student. For more information please visit www.pwcs.edu.

Digital Resources

PBES subscribes to various digital resources meant to enhance your student’s learning experience. Become familiar with them and use them often. We welcome feedback as well!

MyOn: Students have access to over 5,000 high quality digital books, complete with narration if enabled.

Dreambox: Learning mathematics in this engaging learning environment provides students with important foundational skills using models and manipulatives. Most importantly, Dreambox adapts to the student. The more students use it, the more it learns each individual and can deliver exactly what is needed—extending learning up to 8th grade skills!

BrainPop: BrainPop provides engaging videos and learning tools all tied to the curriculum. It’s a great resource to review for tests or learn new information.

Volunteering:

Visits and volunteering in the classroom and/or hallways should be prearranged with the classroom teacher prior to arrival at PBES. Parents who will be regularly volunteering in the classroom will be asked to read and sign a Volunteer Guidelines and Confidentiality Form.

Parent Observations Policy:

- Parents will submit advanced written request to the principal stating the purpose and nature of visit.
- The observation will be 30 minutes in length.
- Parents are to “observe only” in order not to disrupt instruction or learning environment.
- An administrator will schedule a specific date and time of the conference to ensure all instructional staff members are present and it is scheduled during instructional time.
- No electronic listening or recording devices are permitted during the observation.
- Observations may occur once per semester.
- An administrator will be present during the visit.
- Outside experts and parents are required to provide copies of notes, reports, and other documentation gleaned from the observation at a collaborative meeting.
- A collaborative meeting will be scheduled and will occur promptly following the observation.

Cosmo the Cardinal